accounting management, electronic fund transfers (EFTs), cashless ticketing, such as EZPay™, marketing management, and data tracking, such as player tracking. Therefore, master gaming controller **2408** may also communicate with EFT system **2412**, EZPay™ system **2416** (a proprietary cashless ticketing system of the present assignee), and player tracking system **2420**. The systems of the gaming machine **2402** communicate the data onto the network **2422** via a communication board **2418**.

[**0205**] It will be appreciated by those of skill in the art that the present invention could be implemented on a network with more or fewer elements than are depicted in **FIG. 24**. For example, player tracking system **2420** is not a necessary feature of the present invention. However, player tracking programs may help to sustain a game player's interest in additional game play during a visit to a gaming establishment and may entice a player to visit a gaming establishment to partake in various gaming activities. Player tracking programs provide rewards to players that typically correspond to the player's level of patronage (e.g., to the player's playing frequency and/or total amount of game plays at a given casino). Player tracking rewards may be free meals, free lodging and/or free entertainment.

[**0206**] Moreover, DCU **2424** and translator **2425** are not required for all gaming establishments **2401**. However, due to the sensitive nature of much of the information on a gaming network (e.g., electronic fund transfers and player tracking data) the manufacturer of a host system usually employs a particular networking language having proprietary protocols. For instance, 10-20 different companies produce player tracking host systems where each host system may use different protocols. These proprietary protocols are usually considered highly confidential and not released publicly.

[**0207**] Further, in the gaming industry, gaming machines are made by many different manufacturers. The communication protocols on the gaming machine are typically hard-wired into the gaming machine and each gaming machine manufacturer may utilize a different proprietary communication protocol. A gaming machine manufacturer may also produce host systems, in which case their gaming machine are compatible with their own host systems. However, in a heterogeneous gaming environment, gaming machines from different manufacturers, each with its own communication protocol, may be connected to host systems from other manufacturers, each with another communication protocol. Therefore, communication compatibility issues regarding the protocols used by the gaming machines in the system and protocols used by the host systems must be considered.

[**0208**] A network device that links a gaming establishment with another gaming establishment and/or a central system will sometimes be referred to herein as a "site controller." Here, site controller **2442** provides this function for gaming establishment **2401**. Site controller **2442** is connected to a central system and/or other gaming establishments via one or more networks, which may be public or private networks. Among other things, site controller **2442** communicates with game server **2422** to obtain game data, such as ball drop data, bingo card data, etc.

[**0209**] In the present illustration, gaming machines **2402**, **2430**, **2432**, **2434** and **2436** are connected to a dedicated gaming network **2422**. In general, the DCU **2424** functions as an intermediary between the different gaming machines on the network **2422** and the site controller **2442**. In general, the DCU **2424** receives data transmitted from the gaming machines and sends the data to the site controller **2442** over a transmission path **2426**. In some instances, when the hardware interface used by the gaming machine is not compatible with site controller **2442**, a translator **2425** may be used to convert serial data from the DCU **2424** to a format accepted by site controller **2442**. The translator may provide this conversion service to a plurality of DCUs.

[**0210**] Further, in some dedicated gaming networks, the DCU **2424** can receive data transmitted from site controller **2442** for communication to the gaming machines on the gaming network. The received data may be, for example, communicated synchronously to the gaming machines on the gaming network.

[**0211**] Here, CVT **2452** provides cashless and cashout gaming services to the gaming machines in gaming establishment **2401**. Broadly speaking, CVT **2452** authorizes and validates cashless gaming machine instruments (also referred to herein as "tickets" or "vouchers"), including but not limited to tickets for causing a gaming machine to display a game result and cashout tickets. Moreover, CVT **2452** authorizes the exchange of a cashout ticket for cash. These processes will be described in detail below. In one example, when a player attempts to redeem a cashout ticket for cash at cashout kiosk **2444**, cash out kiosk **2444** reads validation data from the cashout ticket and transmits the validation data to CVT **2452** for validation. The tickets may be printed by gaming machines, by cashout kiosk **2444**, by a stand-alone printer, by CVT **2452**, etc. Some gaming establishments will not have a cashout kiosk **2444**. Instead, a cashout ticket could be redeemed for cash by a cashier (e.g. of a convenience store), by a gaming machine or by a specially configured CVT.

[**0212**] Turning to **FIG. 25**, more details of gaming machine **2402** are described. Machine **2402** includes a main cabinet **4**, which generally surrounds the machine interior (not shown) and is viewable by users. The main cabinet **4** includes a main door **8** on the front of the machine, which opens to provide access to the interior of the machine. Attached to the main door are player-input switches or buttons **32**, a coin acceptor **28**, and a bill validator **30**, a coin tray **38**, and a belly glass **40**. Viewable through the main door is a video display monitor **34** and an information panel **36**. The display monitor **34** will typically be a cathode ray tube, high resolution flat-panel LCD, or other conventional electronically controlled video monitor. The information panel **36** may be a back-lit, silk screened glass panel with lettering to indicate general game information including, for example, the number of coins played. The bill validator **30**, player-input switches **32**, video display monitor **34**, and information panel are devices used to play a game on the game machine **2402**. The devices are controlled by circuitry housed inside the main cabinet **4** of the machine **2402**.

[**0213**] The gaming machine **2402** includes a top box **6**, which sits on top of the main cabinet **4**. The top box **6** houses a number of devices, which may be used to add features to a game being played on the gaming machine **2402**, including speakers **10**, **12**, **14**, a ticket printer **18** which may print bar-coded tickets **20** used as cashless instruments. The player tracking unit mounted within the top box **6** includes